

Irene budgets \$50,000 per year for law enforcement

Editor's Note: This is the eighth story in an Observer series titled "In a Minutes Notice." These articles highlight important information in meeting minutes and other public notices published by newspapers. Part eight reviews budget appropriations for public safety (fire protection and law enforcement) in eight area small towns.

South Dakota Highway 46 runs right through the middle of the City of Irene. The busy highway means business for gas stations and bars in town. It also brings safety concerns to the community of 409 people.

To minimize potential traffic dangers from the busy highway, Irene city officials spend more on law enforcement than other area communities of similar size. One of the main duties for Irene police officers over the years is enforcement of the 25 miles per hour speed limit.

Irene's last police chief resigned in 2016, causing the city council to consider other policing options. Board members ultimately approved a \$50,000 annual contract with the Clay County Sheriff's Office to provide 30 hours of law enforcement per week.

Clay County Sheriff Andy Howe attends monthly Irene City Council meetings with an activity report from the previous month. Sheriff Howe told his Clay County Commission that the Irene contract would require his department to add an additional deputy at a cost of \$47,000, plus \$4,500 for annual vehicle expenses in his budget.

Irene has a 2017 General Fund budget of \$239,650, including \$5,750 for the 29-man Irene Fire Department.

Irene and most other area fire departments also get property tax revenue from landowners in their designated fire districts. The volunteer departments generate additional dollars for necessary equipment with dances, raffles, and other fundraisers.

Town of Wakonda (population 312) 2017 General Fund budget numbers were not available, but South Dakota Department of Legislative Audit records show the community had a General Fund of \$335,213 in 2013 and \$398,650 in 2014. Wakonda officials approved a new contract with the Clay County Sheriff's Department for 2017, paying the county



Members of Lesterville Rural Fire Department's Fire and Rescue team pose in front of a house blaze they were monitoring last summer in a controlled burn exercise.

\$15,000 per year for 12 hours of law enforcement patrols and community coverage per week.

Town of Tabor (population 412) has a 2017 General Fund budget of \$196,278 with \$4,100 budgeted for the fire department and \$8,500 for police.

Of the \$8,500 designated for Tabor police, \$3,000 is used to hire security for the Czech Days celebration in June. The other \$5,500 goes to the Bon Homme County Sheriff's Department for 20 hours of law enforcement presence and community patrols per month.

Town of Gayville (population 415) has a 2017 General Fund budget of \$87,400. Gayville Volunteer Fire and Rescue receives \$5,000 from the town. The 32-member department responds to over 35 calls each year, which includes fires, motor vehicle accidents, and other emergencies in their district.

Gayville's protection district includes the Town of Gayville, Gayville Township, a portion of Volin Township, and a portion of Clay County for fire and rescue calls. No Gayville money is designated for law enforcement.

Town of Lesterville (population 126) has a 2017 General Fund budget of \$69,340. Of that amount, \$12,000 is designated for the Lesterville Fire Department, which includes upkeep of the town fire hall. No Lesterville money is budgeted for law enforcement.

Town of Utica (population 64) has a 2017 General Fund budget of \$33,794. Of that amount, \$1,000 goes to

the nearby Lesterville Fire Department for community fire protection. No Utica money is budgeted for law enforcement.

Utica was protected by a volunteer fire department for years and town officials still maintain a fire station with two stalls for firefighting vehicles. Lesterville is located nine miles away, so one Lesterville Fire Department truck is always parked at the Utica station. The Lesterville department also has

firefighters living in the Utica area to ensure fast response in the event of a Utica fire.

Town of Volin (population 160) has a 2017 General Fund budget of \$58,863. Volin officials designate \$3,000 for the volunteer fire department. No Volin money is budgeted for law enforcement.

Town of Mission Hill (population 176) has a 2017 General Fund budget of \$47,100. No Mission Hill money is budgeted for law enforcement or fire protection. It has been many years since Mission Hill operated a volunteer fire department. The community gets fire protection as part of the Yankton Rural Fire Department tax district.

Law enforcement note: When there is a crime report, emergency, or accident, the Yankton County Sheriff's Department responds to calls in Mission Hill, Gayville, Volin, Utica and Lesterville. Yankton County deputies also drive through each of those small towns once a day as part of their rural patrol schedule. The five communities do not pay for that service.

There has not been a history of towns inside Yankton County contracting with the sheriff's office to get additional patrols or law enforcement coverage.

Sources: Published meeting minutes of Town of Utica, Town of Lesterville, Town of Volin, Town of Mission Hill, Town of Wakonda, City of Irene, Town of Tabor, Town of Gayville, and Clay County.

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